

TESTIMONY OF
FRANK W. RIDLEY
Executive & Legislative Nominations Committee
March 10, 2009

Good morning Senator Looney, Representative Janowski and members of the Committee. I am Frank W. Ridley and I am pleased to appear before you this morning as a nominee for re-appointment to the Board of Governors for Higher Education.

I was appointed to the Board of Governors in 2001 and have been honored to serve as its vice-chair from 2003 to 2007 and for the past two years, as its chairman.

As chair, my priority has been to strengthen the Board's work on behalf of students, taxpayers and policymakers. State statute assigns our Board a myriad of responsibilities with which you are undoubtedly familiar. And we have a growing list from the federal government as well. But our role is even broader than these mandates; our purpose, as I see it, is essentially three-fold:

First, to protect the student interest. This is why we have set in place a 15 percent cap on all public college and university tuitions; why we advocate so diligently for student financial aid; why we guarantee educational quality by licensing and accrediting academic programs and institutions; and why we advise students directly about their options in the event of significant changes such as campus closures, as indeed happened this year with Gibbs College.

Our second responsibility is to the taxpayer. We carry out this mission by focusing on accountability, helping to shine a light on college strengths as well as their weaknesses; by examining college textbook policies; by facilitating student transfer; by assuring new academic programs are created only if adequate resources exist and without duplication; and by anticipating and planning for future trends.

Let me give you a brief illustration: we all know that college enrollment throughout Connecticut is booming and as a result, we are awarding more degrees than ever. But in reality, other states are gaining on us, and our level of educational attainment has actually fallen and stands to fall further at great risk to our economy, unless we, at the state level, act soon.

Third, our purpose is to serve you, and the public at large, by providing you with objective systemwide analysis and helping our public higher education system respond to workforce needs. Take the fast-emerging field of nanotechnology as one example. Last year, we built a collaborative and created the state's only nanotechnology minor and applications course, capitalizing on the public and private resources at hand. Our focus now is developing transfer opportunities within a nanoscience core curriculum, and securing grants to support three Nanohubs which will provide equipment in experiential learning.

We have accomplished much in recent years. I look forward to continuing to work with you in protecting the

best interests of our students, our taxpayers and all
concerned about the future of higher education.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may
have. Thank you.